

Dallas' Children's Medical Center
offers Disney-like, on-stage and
off-stage approach to patient care

the
star
treatment

Star treatment isn't just a slogan, it is a
way of business at Children's Medical
Center Ambulatory Care Pavilion in Dallas.

From complimentary valet services
to call-ahead scheduling and
pre-registration, this center is setting itself
apart in the healthcare arena with its
"Are You Treated Like a Star" initiative,
which encourages patients and families
to rate their healthcare experience.

By Brian McFarlane, AIA, Photos by John Davis



“The goal is to enhance clinician collaboration and make it easier for patients to receive care from multiple specialists. We also want patients to know that they come first through star treatment from the minute they enter the building until the time they get into their car.”

1. Children’s Medical Center features glass-front elevators that provide an exciting view of the atrium.

2. Designers created a clearly recognizable entry to Children’s Medical Center to partly to enhance intuitive wayfinding.

3. Exam rooms, with computers on wheels, are designed to be flexible and patient-friendly.

4. Natural light brightens many areas of the center, especially the nurse’s stations.

5. The word “welcome” appears in 31 different languages above the welcome desk.

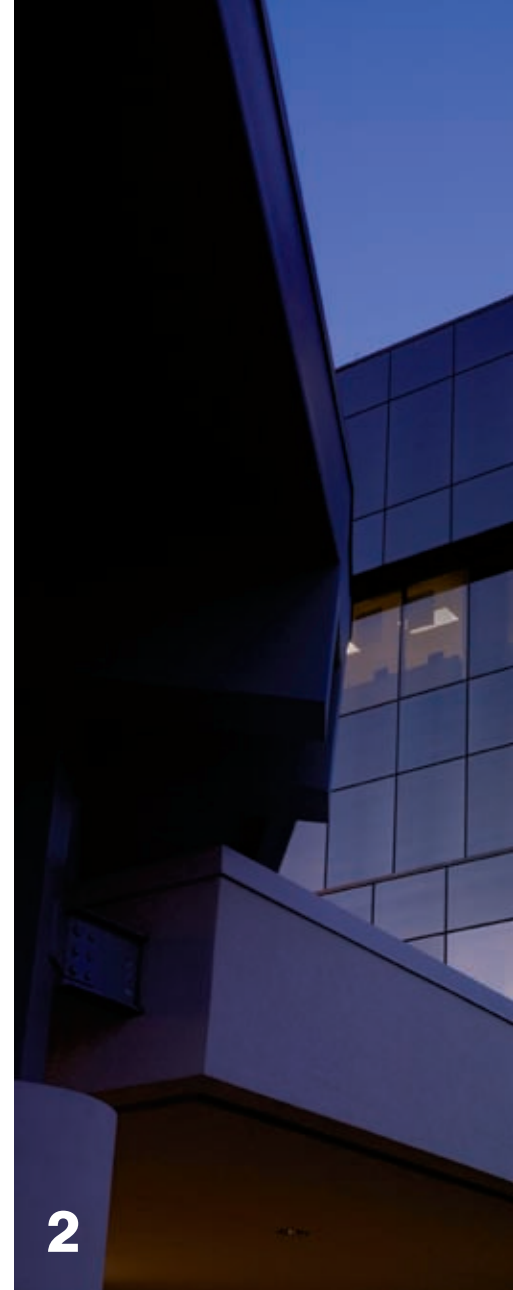
Open in January 2007, the 160,000-square-foot ambulatory care pavilion consolidated an array of pediatric clinical services located throughout the campus into dedicated floors for outpatient clinic services.

According to Chris Dougherty, vice president of ambulatory care services, the clinical space is designed around a neighborhood concept to improve efficiency of care delivery.

“Neighborhoods are clusters of services that have been created around patient care needs,” said Dougherty. “The goal is to enhance clinician collaboration and make it easier for patients to receive care from multiple specialists. We also want patients to know that they come first through star treatment from the minute they enter the building until the time they get into their car.”

Evidence-based design was put to the test when designing all aspects of the project. “The hospital’s goal was that every patient spends at least 50 percent of their entire ambulatory encounter receiving clinical care,” said Ronald W. Dennis, AIA, ACHA, principal-in-charge, HKS Inc. “A proactive, thoughtful design was priority to ensure the project’s success.”

Parking is a one of the biggest concerns for patient family members when



they visit the facility. The parking lot in front of the pavilion was repaved with more than 500 convenient spaces, canopied walkways, valet parking, patient pick-up and drop-off, and a circular drop-off directly in front of the new six-story atrium door.

Just as important as parking is a recognizable entry. According to Doug Compton, AIA, HKS’s principal project designer, the new 6,000-square-foot front door creates excitement as well as easy wayfinding for visitors.

“A five-story glass wall, encompassing the southeast side of the atrium, allows natural light into the entry and creates an inviting space for patients and their loved ones,” Compton said.

The word “welcome” appears in 31



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different languages above the aptly named welcome desk. Staff provides the patient an itinerary for quick reference. The welcome staff also can arrange for translation services, a wheelchair, or anything else that fulfills its star treatment motto.

"It's all about improving throughput in a family friendly space," said Bob Billingsley, IA, HKS principal project designer/planner.

Next to the reception area is a gift shop and family resource center including a library of healthcare information for patients and families with internet accessible computers and wireless capabilities. The area hosts staged arts and crafts activities with kiosks displaying children's work.



5



6. Clinical areas are located on two floors within the pavilion.

7. Circular elements define key areas within the pavilion.

A private hospitality suite can be reserved to make a long-term family stay at the clinic more comfortable. The suite offers a sofa bed, television, lockable door, and kitchenette.

To promote star treatment at Children's Medical Center Ambulatory Care Pavilion, one hour of training per month is offered to staff—ranging from topics such as the power of positive thinking to conflict resolution. An attached kitchen allows staff to educate patients and their families about cooking light while large and small conference rooms serve as classrooms for education activities such as diabetes education programs.

The entire pavilion is designed to create a Disney-like, on-stage and off-stage approach to patient care. The clinic floor plan distinguishes these spaces as service, public, and patient, separating them vertically by floor and horizontally with behind-the-scenes spaces. Ancillary services—including physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology, speech, and social services—are



located on the perimeter of the building, while physician activity and patient treatment is centrally located.

Two 65,000-square-foot clinical floors offering 64 exam rooms each are located on the fourth and fifth floors. The clinics include ear, nose and throat, pulmonary, cystic fibrosis, plastics (craniofacial), orthodontics, dermatology, allergy/immunology, and genetics/metabolism. One similarly sized clinic floor is currently being planned for expansion.

By providing all needed aspects of outpatient care in one building, the amount of time spent waiting or traveling will be minimized for patients and their families. For example, an orthopedics patient might also need to visit radiology, rheumatology, neuro-



ogy, rehabilitation medicine, physical therapy, and occupational therapy. At Children's Medical Center, those needs will be met in one space.

"The new space features family-focused and modular patient exam rooms that can be used for multiple modalities," said Dennis.

"The multiple-use space reduces wait times for patients, as rooms will be in constant use."

Similar to an inpatient COW system (Computers On Wheels), the exam rooms are also flexible and patient friendly. Computers, located in wheeled cabinets, can be used in private by physicians or shared with families via an in-room, flat screen monitor display.

The outpatient pavilion is designed with an emphasis on convenience for

the patient, but not at the expense of function for the staff. Touchdown spaces are offered for nurses and doctors on each floor, allowing them access to the latest in charting technology. The break room offers employees gourmet coffee, a widescreen television, and views to the outdoors. Employees are also recognized and offered incentives based on the number of positive star treatment comments received by patients and their families.

Designed on a tight urban site, the hospital purchased an existing structure that had housed a Menswear Mart and converted the apparel space into a state-of-the-art medical facility.

"Many hospitals located in densely developed, urban areas are challenged with limited land areas suitable for expansion and growth," said Dennis. "This project tackles adaptive rehabilitation of existing buildings to medical uses in a way that saves time and money and creates a visually exciting and appropriate environment for families and patients."

However, converting Menswear Mart into a state-of-the-art medical facility did pose many challenges for the design and construction team due to the interior configuration, limited floor-to-floor height, existing escalator transportation systems, and perimeter mechanical room locations.

"To convert a commercial-zoned building into a healthcare facility took a creative and innovative approach to design and construction," said Roy Gunsolus, AIA, principal project manager, HKS. "While the typical healthcare space hosts 15- to 16-foot floor-to-ceiling heights, the existing

building offered 13 feet. Due to these limited heights, additional coordination was needed to meet the healthcare facility's stringent air change requirements. Working with the MEP designer, air duct work, lighting, and sprinkler systems were thoughtfully and successfully placed on each floor."

For the kids' safety, the project team opted to remove the escalators and replaced them with glass-front elevators that offer an exciting view of the atrium. The building's floor plates were also considerably larger than needed for an outpatient space. To address this, the space is broken out in distinct neighborhoods.

"The last piece of the puzzle came together with the reconstruction of the attached West Atrium Building," said Gunsolus. "Following its demolition, we rebuilt the south side of the building to create the pavilion's dramatic, glass wall entry."

Since its opening, the pavilion has received rave reviews. "The project's success is due to our teamwork approach involving Children's Medical Center Dallas, medical and facility professionals, the developer as well as the architect, consultants, and contractor," said Dougherty. "Our ultimate goal will continue to be making the outpatient experience the most positive it can be for patients and their families." ■



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